

Guidance on Telework and Government Closures Due to Weather Events

In 2012, we modified our telework policy to clarify the requirements in situations where OPM issues a Government closure. To summarize: Employees who are on regularly scheduled or episodic telework and/or travel status outside of their regular commuting area are required to work or take leave, unless a personal hardship exists or the employee is unable to work due to the office being closed.

Some confusion still remains and I wanted to elaborate upon this policy in an attempt to further clarify. In general, all employees with a telework agreement of some form are collectively called Telework-Ready Employees in the Government closure policies. Specifically, CNCS has two broad groups of Telework-Ready employees:

1. Regularly Scheduled Telework Employees

In most situations, employees regularly scheduled to perform telework should be prepared to telework on their regularly scheduled telework day regardless of the weather conditions. Therefore, when the Government is closed it should not be an inconvenience for them to work unless a personal hardship exists. Employees who telework from remote locations full time are also required to work during any closure of CNCS Headquarters under the same assumption that they would normally telework that day regardless of the weather.

2. Episodic Teleworkers

Episodic Teleworkers are those employees who have a telework agreement in place, but may not have actually been scheduled to telework that day. An employee with an episodic telework agreement in place, who was scheduled to telework on the day of the closure, should follow the same guidance as those employees with a regularly scheduled telework day. For those episodic teleworkers who were not scheduled to telework on the day of the closure, they are expected to either telework or take unscheduled leave. If a personal hardship (as defined below) exists, the employee may request his or her supervisor to grant an excused absence or administrative leave. The decision to grant an excused absence is at the supervisor's discretion. If the supervisor does not grant excused absence, the employee will take leave for the time in question. Employees with episodic telework agreements that were not scheduled to telework must contact their

supervisors as early as possible on the day of closure to indicate whether they are teleworking or on leave.

What Are Personal Hardships

We can't conceive of each and every hardship that might apply to a given employee. OPM's guidance only mentions a few such as loss of electricity or lack of child care for small children. However, other hardships that may also occur related to the closure (especially if it is with little notice) include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of elder care
- Failure to have access to a computer
- Lack of work to perform
- Lack of internet capabilities

Managers and supervisors need to use their discretion when these issues arise. As a matter of fairness, a lack of planning ahead (for example, an employee not taking their laptop and work home the night before a forecast of bad weather is made and the probability is high that there might be a closure the next day) should not be considered a personal hardship. If you have any questions regarding this guidance you can contact Charles Collins, Director of Workforce Relations at ccollins@cns.gov.